1780

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MR. WILLIAMS'S

ELECTION SERMON,

MAY 11th, 1780.

BRITISH MUSEUM

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE AUDIENCE

OF THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

STATE of CONNECTICUT,

AT

HARTFORD,

ON THE DAY OF THEIR

ANNIVERSARY ELECTION,

MAY 11th, 1780.

BY NATHAN WILLIAMS, M. A.

Paſtor of the CHURCH in TOLLAND.

HARTFORD:

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M, DCC, LXXX.

At a General Assembly of the Governor and Company of the State of Connecticut, in America, holden at Hartford, on the second Thursday of May, Anno Domini 1780.

ORDERED, That Col. SAMUEL CHAPMAN and Mr. HOPE LATHROP, return the Thanks of this Assembly to the Rev. NATHAN WILLIAMS, for his Sermon delivered before the Assembly on the 11th instant, and desire a Copy thereof that it may be printed.

A true Copy of Record,

Examined, by

GEORGE WYLLYS, Sec'ry.

BRITISH MUSEUM

EXODUS, xxxii. 32.

Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their ſin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy Book, which thou haſt written.

THE great Parent of the Univerſe by enduing us with reaſon, that bright ray of divinity, has made us capable of that diſintereſted benevolence, which is a characteriſtic of every good man, and an important part of real conformity to GOD. For thus we are directed, *to love our enemies, to bleſs thoſe that curſe us, to do good to thoſe that hate us, and to pray for thoſe that deſpitefully uſe us and perſecute us; that we may be the children of our heavenly Father, who maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil and on the good and ſendeth rain on the juſt and on the unjuſt.* * And without this it is vain for us to pretend to real chriſtianity: For that man *is a liar, who ſaith he loveth GOD and hateth his brother.* †

HOWEVER the Bible plainly teacheth us, that good men may be expected to have a particularly friendly regard to that community with which they are immediately connected, and to which they are under ſpecial obligations.

THE

* MATT. v. 44, 45. † JOHN, iv. 20.

THE apoſtle Paul, in an extacy of love and concern, was almoſt ready to wiſh himſelf accurſed from CHRIST, for his brethren, his kinſmen according to the fleſh. And a greater than he expreſt the tenderest feelings of real friendſhip to his native country, and particularly to Jeruſalem, the capital of it, ſo as even to ſhed tears at the view of thoſe dreadful calamities that were ſoon to be brought upon it; ſaying, *if thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.* ‡

THE words now read, for the ſubject of our religious meditations, exhibit another inſtance of genuine patriotiſm in Moſes, that prime-miniſter of the Great King of Iſrael --*Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their ſin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee out of thy book which thou haſt written.* The ſin here referred to, was their making and worſhipping the golden calf which Aaron made; for which GOD, in righteous anger, did ſeverely puniſh that people.

ON this memorable occaſion Moſes acted the part of a mediator, earneſtly interceeding with GOD to forgive their ſin. And (as if his heart was wholly bound up in the proſperity of his people) he utters a conditional wiſh, that GOD would even blot him out of his Book.

BY *book here*, ſome have underſtood the ſame with the book of life, ſeveral times referred to in the Revelation of St. John, ſuppoſed to be a regiſter of GOD's eternal

‡ LUKE, xix. 43.

eternal purpoſe concerning the ſalvation of ſome of mankind: Intimating that Moſes did even prefer the preſent proſperity of that people to his own eternal happineſs. Others conſider it as referring to the regiſter of GOD's viſible people, his church on earth; and that Moſes choſe to be ſeparated from the congregation of the ſaints, rather than that they ſhould be followed with the ſevere judgments of heaven.

BY *the book which GOD had written*, is ſometimes underſtood, alſo, the *book of the living*, as mentioned Pſalm lxix. 28. Intimating that his heart was ſo bound up in the welfare of his people, that he was willing to ſacrifice not only his eaſe and outward intereſt, but even his life for their ſake.

BUT it is to our preſent purpoſe to conſider this hypothetic prayer as expreſſive of true patriotiſm. From hence we may be led to enquire into the nature and ſome of the expreſſions of that love to our country which the Bible recommends---together with ſome of thoſe obligations which ſhould influence us to get and expreſs a friendly concern for our country's good.

THERE may, indeed, be ſome circumſtantial difference, between that univerſal benevolence, which the goſpel ſo much inſiſts upon as eſſential to the good man's character, and containing the ſum of religion, and that public ſpiritedneſs or love to our country, now under conſideration.

CHRISTIAN

CHRISTIAN benevolence has for its object *being* in general, without regard to any connection that we, in particular may have with others: Or any good we have received, or may expect ſtill to receive from them. It rather centers merely in the object, and conſiders him, as capable of happineſs.

THIS godlike diſintereſted affection, therefore, extends as freely to foes as to friends --to ſtrangers as to acquaintance---to bad men as to good men; and does not neceſſarily imply any ſuch aſſociations amongſt mankind as conſtitute ſociety. Adam, in the moment of creation, was capable of this radical virtue, and ſoon felt the exerciſe of it, without that baſe alloy which attends even every good man in this ſtate of imperfection.

BUT that patriotiſm which Moſes here, and often elſe-where expreſſes, is circumſcribed with narrower limits, including none but thoſe with whom we are connected in the bonds of ſociety. This indeed is included in that general principle of benevolence which marks the character of every good man. That love to our country which is acceptable to GOD, being as it were, ſanctified by ſupreme love to him, ſuppoſes a proper community or public ſociety formed for the purpoſes of ſocial life, and to ſupport the juſt rights of each individual, very different from thoſe combinations formed by lawleſs and rapacious men, for the purpoſes of oppreſſion and rapine, and to defend themſelves againſt the hand of juſtice. Such as have taken place amongſt pirates and robbers;

bers: Theſe, inſtead of being friends to mankind, violate every principle of charity and juſtice, and as free booters practiſe indiſcriminate rapine.

Every ſuch combination (ſo far from having right to our eſteem) ſhould be conſidered as unfriendly to the natural rights of mankind; and inſtead of wiſhing to uphold them, every friend to God and mankind will ſeek their deſtruction.

Some proper ſenſe of the advantage, the importance and neceſſity of explicit combinations, for the purpoſes of ſocial life is needful, as the foundation of all proper exerciſes of heart towards mankind, conſidered as ſocial beings, that God has formed us for ſociety, and that there are many unavoidable and inſuperable diſadvantages of a ſolitary life.

Hence 'tis eaſy to infer, that when formed into ſociety no individual has any intereſt (of a ſecular nature eſpecially) wholly detatched from the public, and that when connected with others for our mutual advantage, we owe our whole intereſt to the public; and the community have right to require it of us, when needed for the advantage of the *whole*: That we are forbid to look on our own things merely or ſeperately, but required to look alſo on the things of others: That we be willing to exert ourſelves to the utmoſt of our power for the good of others, and to bear one anothers burthens; and from a ſuperior regard to the intereſt of the public, be ready to give up our own, when the exigencies of the whole require it.

THE foundation principles of ſociety, with all their genuine conſequences, are plainly taught and forcibly urged by the religion of the Bible; and hence public ſpiritedneſs becomes a mark of the good man's character; and a part of the duty we owe to GOD. And as this is a practical virtue, unleſs we act up to it we forfeit the protection of ſociety, and as it were diſband from the reſt, and throw ourſelves back into a ſtate of nature, in which we muſt take care of and and provide for ourſelves alone. Yea, that man deceives himſelf who pretends to love his country, and yet is not duly concerned to ſeek its welfare.

THIS leads to conſider, a little more particularly, ſome of the expreſſions of this patriotic ſpirit, and,

1. A CHRISTIAN love to our country will make us cautious not to pull down the judgments of Heaven upon it, and careful to engage the divine favour.

IT is of the higheſt conſequence to a people that they be intereſted in the ſmiles of Heaven. But ſin is that evil of evils which will ſeperate between a people and their GOD, and cauſe him to hide his face from them. This breaks up their hedge of protection, and even engages divine perfection againſt them.

A WHOLE community may ſuffer by the miſconduct of an individual. A ſingle treſpaſs of Achan troubled the whole camp of Iſrael; and even David (whoſe heart was bound up in the welfare of his ſubjects) brought death upon thouſands of them, by his miſconduct:

conduct: And who can tell what miſchief a wicked man may do by introducing and propagating vice amongſt a people?

NOTWITHSTANDING the moſt ſpecious pretenſions to patriotiſm, a vicious man proves himſelf an enemy to his country, and will, probably, do more to ruin it by his vice, than he can otherways to ſave it. But a true friend to his country will do what in him lies to diſcountenance vice and to encourage virtue. If he is in private life, he will endeavour to let the light of a religious converſation ſhine before others, to ſtir up in them a laudible emulation to glorify GOD. If he is the maſter of a family, he will engage that as for him and his houſe they will ſerve the LORD. If he be in ſtill more public life, he will direct all his influence to bring true virtue and religion into eſteem; and every good man, whilſt he prays for all men, will particularly remember his brethren his kinſmen according to the fleſh. In this way he may do the moſt eſſential public ſervice: For the effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.

THE eminent ſervice which Moſes did to the people of Iſrael in this way deſerves particular notice. He was moſt ready thus to improve his influence; and, in anſwer to his prayers, GOD granted them many great and ſignal favours, and ſuſpended many judgments. The manner of expreſſion in a particular inſtance is remarkable; *Let me alone* ſays GOD to Moſes (earneſtly interceeding for the people) *that I*

may

*may deſtroy them**. As if the arms of the *Moſt High* were bound by Moſes's prayer. Great obligations are a ſinful people often under to pious patriots for their devout prayers.

2dly. PROPER love to our country will influence us to a due concern for the ſupport of government.

CIVIL authority is abſolutely needful for the well being of ſociety, and therefore when men enter into public combinations, it is with a deſign to unite the right that each individual has to defend himſelf againſt violent men, and to promote order and virtue; at leaſt to awe the diſorderly into decency of behaviour.

GOD himſelf highly approves of this, and owns thoſe duly veſted with civil authority as his miniſters, deſigned for the good and not for the hurt of a people, and ſuch miniſters will pay a ſacred regard to the deſign of their inveſtiture: And by wiſely framing and faithfully executing good and wholeſome laws, will be careful not to bear the ſword in vain. And every other friend to his country will endeavour to ſtrengthen their hands and encourage their hearts, in every ſuitable way. Thus the good people in Iſrael encouraged Ezra to a vigorous exertion of his high authority, with a promiſe of their aſſiſtance, *Ariſe*, ſay they, *for this matter belongeth unto thee; we alſo will be with thee; be of good courage and do it.*‡

OUT of reſpect to the civil inſtitution and as an ordinance of heaven, every friend to his country will yield

* DEUT. ix, 14. ‡ EZRA x, 4.

yield a chearful and conſcientious obedience to the good and needful laws of the land; and by no means will he give trouble to rulers by a diſorderly walk; becauſe this would tend to fruſtrate the deſign of civil combination, and to deſtroy the ſtate: Yea, and would be a ſin againſt GOD, who requires us to *be ſubject not only for wrath but alſo for conſcience ſake.**

A TURBULENT and unruly perſon, who allows himſelf to trample upon the laws, is, in this reſpect an enemy to his country; and may ſo eſſentially violate his obligations to the ſtate as to forfeit its protection and even to merit its heavieſt frowns. Such heady, high minded, ſelf-willed, unruly perſons, will do their endeavour to bring civil rulers into diſcredit; to weaken their influence, and to render them incapable of ſerving their country in their public ſtations.

THE word of GOD ſharply reproves ſuch as are forward to believe and raiſe ill reports concerning civil rulers; to magnify their ſmall miſtakes and to render them odious in the view of men: It calls ſuch *deſpiſers of government, preſumptuous and ſelf-willed*‖.

3dly. A PATRIOTIC ſpirit will expreſs itſelf in a due concern for the ſupport of religion.

THOUGH the principles of our holy religion have often met with ridicule from men of corrupt minds, yet it will forever remain a truth, that they afford the moſt rational and ſolid grounds on which to build our hopes of immortality; and alſo the moſt friendly aſſiſtance

* ROM. xiii, 5. ‖ 2 PETER ii, 10.

assistance to every well constructed civil establishment. Religion adds the weight of divine authority to him who is the minister of God for good to his people: It draws an hedge of protection around him, of more importance than walls of solid brass: Yea it defends the property and the person of each individual, by considerations of infinite moment, as it denounces indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.

Infidel scoffers are constrained to own this when they pretend that religion is a state engine, a piece of artful deception, framed by some crafty ruler to awe his subjects into ready obedience.

Though every good man will regard religion chiefly because of its respect to things of eternal consequence,---yet he will also firmly believe its doctrines and faithfully practise its precepts, because of its happy tendency to the present support and well being of civil society. That man therefore is very improperly termed a patriot, who contradicts and counteracts his own pretensions of love to his country in beating away one of its main pillars, by endeavouring to propagate infidelity with its countless train of vices.

If we are true friends to the public, we shall esteem, we shall practise, and with our utmost abilities shall endeavour to support that religion, which, in the best manner provides for the spiritual good of each individual, for the peace and prosperity of human society, and for the glory of God.

Moses

MOSES was a man of a truly religious character, and paid a ſacred regard to its inſtitution---forming his own belief and practice from divine dictates: And, with the authority of a Prime Miniſter, was zealous in the cauſe and for the ſupport of the true religion.

DAVID alſo greatly diſtinguiſhed himſelf for this---and was remarkable for a pious regard to the religious inſtitutions of divine worſhip; and indeed for every thing connected with religion. Once more,

4thly, A PUBLIC ſpirited perſon will endeavour in every ſuitable way to defend his country againſt its enemies.

IT is indeed a ſad evidence of the great depravity of human nature, that man ſhould be an enemy to man: That there ſhould be hatred, variance, wrath, emulations, ſtrifes and contentions amongſt thoſe formed for rational ſociety.

BUT ever ſince the fatal apoſtacy the ſeeds of bitterneſs have been found in the human heart, working the miſchief and ruin of the ſpecies; ſometimes they have produced open hoſtilities: Societies of men, have riſen up to bite and devour one another, and often in the ſame community there have been inſidious men, wiſhing ill to the State, under which they have enjoyed invaluable privileges.

BUT the man who is a friend to his country will do nothing to diſturb the peace and happineſs of it: Will give no ſecret or open countenance to its enemies

mies; but will rather sacrifice his interest and hazard his life, when called to it, for his country's defence.

To sum up all in a word; the man of a truly patriotic spirit, will carefully study and faithfully perform the several duties incumbent upon him, as a member of society: If he is raised to a station of eminence, as a magistrate, it will be his great concern to be a minister of God, for good to his people: If he sustains the sacred character, he will watch for souls, as one that must give an account, and endeavour to make full proof of his ministry: As a private christian, he will attend to the institutions of religion, and watch over his brother, for the good of his soul: If he is a soldier, the love of his country will influence him to obey his orders, and to oppose his enemies, and in the best manner answer the important ends of his appointment.

Thus, the christian patriot, the man whose heart is warmed with love to God and his country, will exercise himself to keep a conscience always void of offence towards God and towards men.

But it is time that we proceed to consider briefly, some of those obligations which bind each individual of every well constituted common wealth, to the feelings and exercises of a true public spirit. These arise, in part, from the authority of God himself, and partly from the nature and advantages of such society. God has formed us social beings, and in this plainly intimates his pleasure that we associate, and of consequence that he does approve of every lawful, rational and

and profitable aſſociation. He has, therefore, in his word laid down ſundry political maxims, as the foundation, and for the ſupport and well being of it: He has pointed out to magiſtrates and ſubjects, and to every rank and claſs of men, the parts they are to act, as connected with others, that ſo inſtead of being peſts and plagues to the community, they may ſubſerve its true intereſt; and no member of ſociety can tranſgreſs the line of his duty, without ſining againſt God, and thus expoſing himſelf to damnation; and thoſe who fear God will be ſolicitous to perform their ſeveral relative duties, from a principle of obedience to him.

But further: Every man is bound to the public by the advantages he has received, or may ſtill look to receive from it. Here

1ſt. The full enjoyment of religion is a capital benefit, which we expect to receive from ſociety, and ſhould greatly endear it to us.

It is greatly important that we be allowed to worſhip God, according to his will; and every man has an unalienable right to judge for himſelf what this is, and is accountable to none but God, who is the only Lord of the human conſcience; provided always that he doth not abuſe this liberty to introduce and promote civil diſſention.

Various indeed have been the ſentiments of mankind, concerning the authority of civil rulers in religious matters; to allow them a diſcretionary power

is peculiar to the *dark corners* and ages of the world. Attempts to enforce uniformity in doctrine or diſcipline, have murdered the beſt of men, and ſhook the firmeſt civil ſtates to their centers.

True religion is ever friendly to the natural rights of mankind: Whatever, therefore, teaches men to be hurtful members of ſociety, may be diſcountenanced by civil authority, even though it wear the maſk of religion: But every man has right to the protection of the ſtate, in the ſober improvement of his natural religious liberty, and may expect to be protected againſt every one that would lord it over his conſcience.

Indeed ſince religion is of great importance to the State, and of the higheſt conſequence to each individual, mankind enter into ſociety, that they may enjoy the advantages of religious fellowſhip in all thoſe devotional exerciſes, which tend to the glory of God and the ſalvation of their own ſouls.

Again. From the public we juſtly expect to have our properties ſecured to us.

In a ſtate of nature, every man is expoſed to the depredations of covetous men, whoſe gold is their God; and in this caſe, the weak would fall a prey to the ſtrong and powerful. This is ſo obvious, that every one will feel it to be for his own intereſt to enter into ſocial combinations, in which the power and ſtrength of the whole will be engaged, for the protection of every individual.

We alſo expect to have our perſons and lives defended.

In a ſtate of nature, theſe are no better ſecured to us than our eſtates. The miſchief-making paſſions of envy, malice and revenge, would turn every man's hand againſt his fellow: Murder would be the common buſineſs of mankind---Therefore to ſecure to men their lives, as well as their properties, is a plain deſign of civil combination: And no conſiderate perſon, regarding only his own intereſt, would heſitate a moment which to chooſe,---whether the looſe defenceleſs ſtate of nature, or the defence of united ſtrength.

Natural juſtice then and gratitude oblige every one, not only to wiſh well to the community, of which he is a part, and from which he doth receive, and expects ſtill to receive ſuch important advantages; but alſo to exert all his powers for its ſupport and well-being. And as he would not forfeit theſe eſſential privileges, he will take no unfriendly meaſure, tending to diſturb the peace of ſociety, and to throw it back into a ſtate of nature.

After all, every civil combination does not merit the patronage of its members---Many forms of government that have taken place in the world, have been attended with great defects. This has ariſen, partly from a faulty imperfection in human nature, and partly from that which belongs to men as men. Hence it comes to paſs, that mankind are ſometimes ſubjected to great inconveniences, even from their ſocial connections;

connections; and as the natural effect of blunders, ariſing either from weakneſs or wickedneſs.

Those forms of government, which, inſtead of ſecuring to the ſubject his invaluable rights, ſubject him to the greateſt inconveniences, do not merit his ſupport. It might be well if they were taken to pieces, to make way for ſuch as would anſwer the valuable purpoſes for which men enter into ſociety. It is true, the beſt plan of civil government that ever was formed (not excepting that which had God himſelf for its author) is liable to be abuſed. Executive miniſters may betray their truſt; and, inſtead of being bleſſings, may become the greateſt curſes to a people. This has often been the caſe. And when it happens, to *oppoſe*, or even to *depoſe*, ſtate miniſters, is not to reſiſt an ordinance of God. For magiſtrates are no longer *miniſters of God* than they are miniſters *for good to the people.*

The things, thus briefly conſidered, lead us to ſeveral Reflections. As,

1ſt. That the appellation of patriot, has been often miſapplied. From the narrow views and looſe principles of mankind, many have been ranked with this claſs of men, merely becauſe they have made high pretenſions to public ſpiritedneſs, when yet they have been influenced mainly or merely by the moſt ſordid ſelfiſhneſs.

To gain much popular applauſe: To rank high in the liſt of generous and worthy men; and riſe to places

places of honour and profit, has influenced many to appear forward in their country's cauſe, who yet are lovers of themſelves, rather than of the public, and of conſequence, are unfit to be truſted with the public intereſt,

By this *love of ſelf* which affects to hide itſelf under the cloke of patriotiſm, the moſt important intereſts of mankind have often been betrayed. Sacred as well as profane hiſtory affords us countleſs inſtances of this nature; yea, at this very day, America is bleeding and groaning under the perfidy of traiterous ingrates, who have abuſed her confidence and rioted in her favours.—Thoſe alſo are improperly called lovers of their country, who are depriving it of the favour and protection of heaven, and expoſing it to God's rebukes by their vices.

It is a ſad thought that thoſe vices which cauſe a land to mourn, ſhould be found in the characters of men, otherwiſe fitted to ſerve their country in its moſt important intereſts, and even entruſted therewith. How ſtrangely do men contradict themſelves in pretending to ſeek their country's good, whilſt by their vices, they are haſtening its ruin! Again,

We infer that thoſe have not only forfeited the protection of the public, but have merited her juſt indignation, who have refuſed to lend her that aſſiſtance they were able to give and ſhe had reaſon to expect, and perhaps have even improved their abilities for her miſchief.

In the preſent juſt and neceſſary war, this country not only needed, but (with the higheſt reaſon) expected that every one would riſe to the moſt vigorous exertions, in ſupport of her cauſe. However, ſhe has nouriſhed a number of ungrateful children, and on ſome of them beſtowed her richeſt favours, whilſt they with a perfidy that diſgraces human nature, have joined with the common enemy, to fetter and enſlave their indulgent parent. Upon every juſt principle, forming and ſupporting human ſocieties, ſuch ingrates deſerve to be ſpurned from her protection, and to feel her ſevereſt reſentments ---Not but that the public may, in imitation of the Great Parent of mankind, receive to pardon *ſuch rebels*, giving due ſigns of penitence.

Again: We are led to reflect upon the great obligations we are under to the public. As,

1. For the great privileges we have derived from her.

The Great Author of our beings, ſays one, agreeable to his uſual wiſdom and goodneſs, has eſtabliſhed ſuch an order and connection of things, that every man receives many eſſential advantages from, and of courſe becomes under great obligations to his country. It was in her dominions we firſt entered upon life. Our infancy and early years were under her protection and guidance: Her laws and government have been our defence againſt lawleſs and violent men. Her rulers have been the appointed guardians of our lives and liberties. In her wiſdom and ſtrength we

we have found ſafety and freedom, amidſt the invaſions and deſigns of foreign enemies: With her people we have enjoyed and cultivated that acquaintance, connection and ſocial intercourſe which tends to make life eaſy, comfortable and pleaſant. Our friends and relations lie ſcattered amongſt her inhabitants: Our eſtates and properties are within her bounds.

And while her regulations thus tend to promote our preſent peace and happineſs, we derive from her religion what is far more valuable yet, the joyful hopes of immortality.

These are rich benefits, which cannot but imply obligations on our part: Obligations of eſteem, gratitude and affection. Further,

The public have many claims upon us, for all her late reſolute aud needful exertions, in the common cauſe of liberty.

Disinterested benevolence is a chriſtian virtue that binds the hearts of good men to their fellow-creatures; but it rarely operates as as a principle in ſtate police. Self-intereſt is the great bond of union between ſtates and kingdoms. From hence aroſe all the advantages which theſe American plantations derived from their connections with Great Britain; and from the ſame ſource have ariſen alſo thoſe many inſtances of unkindneſs and oppreſſion, under which America has groaned.

THIS principle, with an infatuating blindneſs (often its attendant) drove the Britiſh King with many ſubordinate tools of deſpotiſm to ſuch a ſeries of oppreſſion, as could not fail to diſſolve every bond that connected America with Britain; and forced the former to act upon that *innate principle of ſelf defence*, by repelling force with force.

THIS hazardous, but juſt and needful war, has been proſecuted by America, with that unremiting ardour, in the midſt of countleſs difficulties, which nothing but a lively ſenſe of the juſtice and great importance of the cauſe could inſpire.

AND as this conteſt has been in defence of that liberty which is a foundation-bleſſing, giving value to every other good,---every individual, has been deeply intereſted in it---Hence, he ought to feel and acknowledge himſelf under very great perſonal obligations to his country, for all that blood and treaſure ſhe has expended in the preſent calamitous war---And whilſt we bow the knee in humble gratitude to that GOD, who doeth his pleaſure, without controul, for his many wonderful and gracious interpoſitions for this American empire,---we ought to acknowledge our obligations to thoſe many patrons of human liberty, who have ſtept forth in their country's cauſe; denied themſelves the ſolid pleaſures of domeſtic ſociety; hazarded the loſs of eaſe, yea and of life itſelf, by boldly venturing where thickeſt dangers come,---and have perhaps themſelves received the fatal thruſt deſigned for human freedom.

We ought ever religiouſly to acknowledge, the kindneſs of heaven in raiſing up ſuch brave aſſertors of the rights of mankind, and crowning their endeavours with ſuch ſucceſs, that fair liberty (one of the richeſt gifts of God to man) has here found an aſylum, after being driven by the iron hand of tyranny, into theſe American regions, as her laſt retreat.

I may add but once more.---The eſſential advantages which we are allowed ſtill to hope for from our connexions with the public, bind us to her intereſt.

The Supreme Being, indeed is pleaſed, for wiſe and good reaſons, to conceal the face of futurity from mortal ſight. However, the very memorable diſpenſations of his providence, reſpecting this land, even from early times, manifeſt that his eye has been upon it for good; and give us reaſon to hope that he ſtill deſigns favour for it.

We may ſay, with David, *The lines are fallen to us in pleaſant places, yea, we have a goodly heritage.* This land, (like the land of promiſe) may be ſaid to flow with milk and honey,---amply ſupplying its inhabitants with the neceſſaries and conveniences of life; and perhaps no part of the earth can boaſt of a more healthful air, or fruitful ſoil, than this. And from the cauſes that have been and ſtill are at work, we may, with great probability, believe that the perfection and happineſs of mankind, will be carried further in

America, than they have ever yet been in any part of the world---Even the moſt adverſe things have been overruled for good to this people; and by many unforeſeen ways and means, has a ſovereign and gracious God manifeſted his paternal care of theſe infant riſing ſtates. The ſignatures of divine Providence have been very conſpicuous in many important events, that have been and hopefully may ſtill be overruled for general good to this land.

And particularly, has a ſovereign God ſuffered a luſt of riches and lawleſs rule to ſway the breaſts of thoſe intruſted with the government of the Britiſh nation, and to bear down every principle of juſtice; that from thence he might take occaſion to bring about one of the greateſt revolutions that have taken place in human affairs; I mean the *Independence of America.*

If the Independence of the antient Iſraelites, was brought about by more miracles, yet *this*, by ways and means as truly wonderful and equally expreſſive of the divine favour: And from this we may hope, that a gracious God beholds the future greatneſs andprofperity of this country with a propitious eye.

If indeed the *magna charta* of this American empire be not as yet, in all reſpects compleated, we have, however, reaſon to hope that it will be modelled upon the beſt plan. The wiſdom and the underſtanding

ing, the errors and miſtakes of other ſtates and paſt ages, may help us to regulate our own police, and to form a general plan of government, ſuited to the convenience of each individual, and the welfare of the whole. Even our preſent ſtruggles for liberty may have an happy influence into this grand affair, as they will naturally awaken the public to a jealous care not to looſe ſight of thoſe eſſential privileges for which we are contending, even to blood.

A VERY kind providence has raiſed up ſenators from amongſt ourſelves, who will naturally care for our ſtate, and in whoſe wiſdom and patriotiſm we may confide: Humbly looking to that GOD by whom kings rule and princes decree juſtice, to give them the ſpirit of wiſdom and underſtanding; the ſpirit of counſel and might; the ſpirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD, that they may be led to the wiſeſt and beſt meaſures. We may hope to receive eſſential advantages from the religion of the country. By this, indeed, we do not intend any religious creed of human device, deſigned as a general teſt of orthodoxy, and to ſerve as a meaſure to reach to every man's conſcience. Any authoritative attempt to inforce uniformity in doctrine or diſcipline, will be like thoſe rigorous impoſitions which drove our pious anceſtors from their goodly habitations to the dreary wilds of America.

BUT the religion of the goſpel, which is generally profeſſed in this land of light and liberty, is pure and peaceable, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated, full of

of mercy and good fruits. And as it points out the way, in which ſinners of mankind may obtain the favour of GOD; ſo, its genuine tendency is, to raiſe human nature to its higheſt degree of godlike perfection---inſpiring men with reverence to the DEITY and benevolence to each other. And as it is in the beſt manner calculated to make men good members of ſociety, and promote peace and good order, it will prove one of the main pillars of a free and equal government.

CHRISTIANITY, indeed, like every other good inſtitution, is liable to be greatly miſunderſtood and abuſed. "And when religion degenerates into enthuſiaſm and fanataciſm, it produces a ſpirit of leveliſm and fierceneſs, which, with a blind and fiery zeal, pulls down government, rulers, church, ſtate, ſcience and morals, into one general and common ruin." However, this religious phrenzy, is not peculiar to this country. And, perhaps, no part of chriſtendom has been more free from thoſe enthuſiaſtick wildneſſes, which will introduce ſcenes of ruinous diſorder, than this land. But innumerable are the advantages that may be enjoyed in a community formed upon principles of civil and religious liberty: And theſe are advantages which we are allowed to hope for, in this land, not long ſince the dwelling place of ſavage brutes and ſtill more ſavage men: Whilſt the luſt of domination, natural to the human depraved heart, has found means to deprive mankind in almoſt every other part of the world, of their native rights. Witneſs the numberleſs ſtates

and

and kingdoms of Asia, where tyranny has effaced, even the idea of liberty. Africa is peopled by savages and slaves: Hardly a state in Europe, but feels the iron hand of despotism---some indeed glory in the name of liberty, without enjoying the reality.

But since the community, of which we are members, promises to secure us, from the insuperable disadvantages of a solitary life; and from those (if possible still greater) of an ill devised constitution---or where men of boundless ambition and avarice, have found means to leap the mounds of right, and, lost to all the feelings of humanity, have trampled under foot, the dearest rights of their fellow creatures: And since she engages to us, the free enjoyment even of all those essential rights, for which mankind should enter into society; we are indispensably bound to look up to her with the feelings of gratitude and dutiful affection, and to interest ourselves in all her concernments.

But lest I should trespass too far on the patience of this respectable auditory, I must enlarge no further on this copious and very interesting subject; but shut up the whole with some addresses, which custom renders not only allowable, but decent on such occasions.

And in the first place, it is my duty most respectfully, to address his Excellency, the Governor and Commander in Chief of this State:

May

May it please your Excellency,

IN obedience to your Excellency's command, I stand to day in this desk. You will, therefore, indulge me the liberty of reminding your Excellency that true religious patriotism should be a leading mark in the character of every one intrusted with the interest of the public; and of those, particularly, who are raised to stations of great eminence.

Moses, that eminent ruler in Israel, was remarkably distinguished for his public spiritedness. His heart was bound up in the welfare of his people. In their service he employed his excellent gifts, for their good he sacrificed his own ease, improved all his interest in the court of heaven, and all his talents for government, to make them a virtuous and an happy people. Though by their sinful declensions they frequently merited the divine displeasure; yet he often interceded, and seldom failed to obtain the most important benefits for them: And instead of entertaining a wish to build up himself or family, upon the ruins of that people; he humbly declined the most interesting proposals: And rather than live to see their ruin, chose to be even blotted out of the book which GOD had written.

WE doubt not, Sir, but you have the justest sense of the amiableness of a truly public spirit, and of its great importance, to finish the character of a civil Ruler; and that your own heart is warmed with the same

ſame patriotic principles, that influenced and governed the heart of this eminent ſervant of GOD, and ruler of his people; and promiſe ourſelves ſtill the moſt eſſential advantages, from the genuine operations and expreſſions of it. And whilſt we gratefully acknowledge the kindneſs of heaven, in preſerving your invaluable life and diſtinguiſhed abilities, to ſuch advanced age; and in granting you needed ſupport under the weight of government; we return your Excellency our unfeigned thanks, for your many important ſervices, not only to this, but alſo to the United States of America.

WE devoutly wiſh your Excellency thoſe ſolid ſupports which may be derived from true religion: And that in all the weight of government your heart may be encouraged, and your hands ſtrengthened, by that GOD, who is the ſource of all perfection and authority: That you may live long to ſee the Independence and the liberties of America eſtabliſhed upon the firmeſt baſis; and to receive from the public all thoſe marks of gratitude and eſteem that belong to the moſt eminent and virtuous of her citizens, and at ſome diſtant period receive an unfading crown of glory in the heavens.

WITH proper deference I now turn myſelf to His Honour the Deputy Governor, with the Honorable Counſellors and reſpectable Repreſentatives in General Court aſſembled.

Honorable

Honorable and much reſpected Gentlemen,

AS civil rulers are the miniſters of GOD, deſignated for the good of mankind, it is particularly needful that they fear GOD and hate covetuouſneſs: That they have no intereſt of their own detached from that of the public: But like Moſes have their hearts bound up in the general good, and be willing to ſacrifice their own eaſe, hazard their own ſafety and expend their own intereſt for the community. Theſe important marks went into the character of Moſes, and make a part in the finiſhed character of a good ruler.

AND as they are appointed the guardians of the invaluable rights of individuals, and of the State, the eyes of GOD and man are upon them; and if they are faithful in their eminent ſtations, they highly merit the eſteem and the thanks of the public. But ſhould their important ſervices not meet with a grateful reception from their conſtituents; they are ſure however of the heart-felt ſatisfaction of an acquitting conſcience, and may hope for the approbation of the Moſt High GOD, whoſe ſubſtitutes they are and who will graciouſly reward every faithful ſervant.

BUT ſhould a civil ruler (regardleſs of his duty) ſacrifice the rights and liberties of the community to a luſt of riches and lawleſs rule, he may juſtly expect the keeneſt reſentments and merited vengeance

of

of an injured people. Be ſure he cannot avoid the painful laſhes of his own conſcience now, and theſe will ſerve as a ſad prelude to more tormenting reflections hereafter.

But, gentlemen, we reſt aſſured in the good opinion we have of your abilities and fidelity; and confiding in your ſuperior wiſdom, in your approved zeal for the public good, and pious regard to the authority and honour of God, we cheerfully commit to you, under him, the protection of our properties, our perſons, and what is more our liberty; nothing doubting but you will improve your eminent abilities to advance the public intereſt.

In this day of perplexity, when peculiar embarraſments attend the concernments of the public, ariſing from ſeveral obvious cauſes, we need the beſt ſkill and ſtrenuous exertions of our political fathers, in all matters of government. And whilſt we look up to you, gentlemen, as the patrons of human liberty, and expect that you will faithfully ſeek the peace and welfare of the State, we dare engage you the countenance and ſupport of every conſiderate and good member of ſociety; and devoutly wiſh you all needed light and direction from the Father of Light, to lead you to the beſt and wiſeſt meaſures; and that after being long eminently uſeful to mankind, you may receive the rewards of faithful ſervants in the kingdom of your Heavenly Father.

THIS addreſs nextly turns to the Miniſters of the Goſpel here preſent.

My Reverend Fathers and Brethren,

AS we profeſs to be the diſciples of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, and to bear his commiſſion, it is peculiarly ſuitable that we keep his example in view, and be ſolicitous that the virtues conſpicuous in his life, ſhould be the ornament in ours. And of all the many virtues that ſhone forth in him, perhaps none was more manifeſt than that of real good will to mankind. In this was included a very tender concern for his native country and kindred according to the fleſh. Their beſt intereſt lay peculiarly near his heart. He ſpared no pains that he might promote their real good. And on a view of their obſtinate impenitence, and of that deſtruction which was ſoon to come upon them, he ſhed tears of commiſeration.

"*AND ſhall his bright example ſhine in vain before our eyes?*"

PERHAPS no claſs of men are under greater obligations to cultivate a ſpirit of real patriotiſm than goſpel miniſters. And in their province they may do much to recommend this virtue to others, in all the genuine expreſſions of it.

WITH this view we are to lay open thoſe various relative and ſocial duties, that will make men good members of ſociety, and enforce them upon

upon their conſciences by conſiderations of infinite moment.

For this we have the example of our divine Lord and of his ancient prophets and apoſtles. With an ardent zeal for the glory of God; for the final ſalvation of ſouls, and for the preſent peace and proſperity of civil ſociety, they ſtrenuouſly oppoſed every vicious practice, and forcibly urged every thing virtuous and praiſe-worthy.

And as their inſtructions, reproofs, admonitions and councils tended to reform the vicious and encourage the virtuous, and ſo to advance their beſt intereſt; they tended alſo to the eſſential benefit of the public, becauſe they were ſuited to make them good members of human ſociety. And though they never did (like the venal tools deſpotiſm) preach up the ever to be exploded doctrine of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance,--- yet they greatly encouraged the hearts and ſtrengthened the hands of civil rulers, by urging upon their ſubjects, that ſubmiſſion to rightful authority, which is taught by the firſt principles of civil combination: And this, not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake.

Thus, as the miniſters of Christ, we ſhould urge upon mankind all relative and ſocial duties, and with conſiderations of eternal moment; making theſe ſubſervient to the everlaſting well-being of their ſouls. And ſhould we be inſtrumental in bringing men to be truly wiſe for themſelves, we ſhall do eſ-

ſential,

ſential ſervice to the public: Becauſe the man who is induced to act under the influence of chriſtian principles, will certainly be an harmleſs, and (ſo far as his abilities extend) an uſeful member of ſociety.

THE ſacred function does, at all times, call for much prudence, diligence and ſelf-denial, and perhaps never more than at the *preſent*, which is deeply impreſt with the ſtain of licentiouſneſs. But would we, with true zeal exert ourſelves according to the peculiar exigencies of the preſent perplext times, we might be ſure of the approbation of our own conſciences, and look for that of all good men: And what is infinitely more, might humbly hope to hear that tranſporting *Euge* pronounced on us by our LORD himſelf, *Well done, good and faithful ſervants, enter ye into the joy your Lord.*

A FEW words to this numerous aſſembly, and I have done.

My Friends and Fellow Citizens,

A SOCIETY conſtituted by common reaſon, and formed on the plan of a common intereſt, is undoubtedly one of the moſt neceſſary regulations that ever took place amongſt mankind: For the tendency of human nature, in its preſent depraved ſtate, is to leap the mounds of right. The conſequences therefore of a ſtate of "anarchy, would be more miſchiev-" ous, than if the foundations of the earth were out " of courſe, the ſun ſhould be darkened, the moon

nat

" not give her light, and the ſtars fall from heaven." Every man's hand would be againſt his fellow, and this earth be drenched in ſeas of human blood.

That each one may enjoy the eſſential rights of human nature, men are directed by inſtinct and reaſon, to aſſociate and unite the ſtrength of individuals for the ſupport and ſafety of the whole. But, if we are actuated by ſordid ſelfiſhneſs, and are ſo loſt to every principle of political virtue, as to refuſe the public our utmoſt aid: Oppoſe and weaken the hands of rulers,---and by taking advantage of general diſorder, as it were to riot on the ſpoils of our country; we may well look for the execration of the public, and alſo of that God, who has many ways manifeſted himſelf the patron of human ſociety.

Whilst therefore, ye are exhorted to a tender concern for the public weal: Let a regard to the honour and authority of God, be, as it were the baſis of a public ſpirit. Be aſſured, that thoſe are guilty of the groſſeſt inconſiſtency, who make high pretenſions to patriotiſm, and yet allow themſelves in thoſe vices, which not only damn their own ſouls, but alſo tend to corrupt the community, and pull down upon it the waſting judgments of heaven.

Let us, as it becomes men of reaſon, and made for immortality, ſeriouſly conſider that our conduct here will have influence into futurity. And when human ſocieties are no more, the great Judge of angels and men, will render to every man according to his

his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well doing, ſeek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life. But unto them who are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh upon every ſoul of man that doeth evil; But glory, honour and peace, to every man that worketh good.

F I N I S.

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